

THE GENESIS OF MACAULAY'S HISTORY

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which no previous historian ever obtained in England.

Take a couple of extracts as proofs, from the letters of the most critical and sober historical writer of Macaulay's

time—a man very sceptical by nature and not liable to be carried away by popular enthusiasm or any other kind of enthusiasm, namely Sir G. C. Lewis. He says :

' Every-body is in raptures with Macaulay's " History ". He gets 500!. for six years for his two volumes, and divides the profits after 6,000 copies. This number is *already* sold.

It has had more success than any book since Lord Byron's poems and Walter Scott's novels/ ¹ On volumes iii and iv, he comments : * Macaulay's book has had a prodigious

success. It is exceedingly interesting, and throws a flood of light upon the period ; but it is too long, and it is overdone with details. All the part about Ireland is excellent.

He is peculiarly strong upon ecclesiastical and controversial questions of all sorts/ ²

Some authors write for fame and some for money.

According to Pope, the greatest of all English writers wrote simply for money.

Shakespear (whom you and ev'ry Play-house bill

Style the divine, the matchless, what you will)

For gain, not glory, wing'd his roving flight

And grew Immortal in his own despight.

Macaulay, mainly seeking fame, found that he had won

gain as well as glory, wealth as well as
immortality. In
1856, on the publication of volumes iii and iv
of his His-
tory, Longmans sold 26,500 copies of the
work in ten
weeks, and eleven weeks after publication
the author
received a cheque for ,£20,000 from his
publisher. An

¹ Sir G. C. Lewis to Sir E. Head, Jan. 8, 1849, Letters of Sir
George Corne-
wall Lewis (1870), p. 197.

² Ibid. p. 310.